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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//OSD/ISA/EAP// PRIORITY
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: SPI 17: U.S.-ROK 17TH SECURITY POLICY INITIATIVE
TALKS PART 2 OF 2

Classified By: A/POL Brian D. McFeeters, Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

YRP/LPP UPDATES

¶29. (S) MND USFK Relocation Office (MURO) Negotiation Plans Team Director COL Lee Sock-young called 2008 a key transition year for the YRP as the process moved from the planning and design stages to construction at U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Humphreys. Lee noted that the USAG Humphreys Expansion Parcel 2 criteria package was completed in February, with design and construction slated for October and land development expected to start in October 2009. The landfill process is 41 percent complete. Lee reported that Expansion Parcel K was four percent complete. Construction of the 8 kilometer access road was completed in October 2007. The Project Management Consortium (PMC) reported that three of its 10 tasks have been completed, with progress in all other tasks, including the Master Plan revision, schedule, and baseline costs estimates due in mid-July. Lee reported that the Korea National Housing Corporation would assume a more active role this year, applying their technical expertise to streamline budget planning execution.

¶30. (S) MajGen Panter praised the progress made. He emphasized however, that the ROKG needed to sign the Agreed Recommendation (AR) with a guarantee to build the required levee level and widen the tidal gate at USAG Humphreys as quickly as possible. Not doing so would put U.S. personnel, families, and the multi-billion dollar construction investment being made in jeopardy. USFK Engineer COL Daniel Russell explained that both the levee and the tidal gate would have to be corrected. If the ROKG failed to provide this guarantee, the other option would be to redesign the expansion of Parcel 2 so that all facilities were above the 100-year flood line. COL Russell explained that this would require at least an additional three million cubic meters of soil, increasing the total cost by millions of dollars.

¶31. (S) COL Lee Sock-young noted that MND had agreed on these issues at the October SOFA Joint Committee meeting, but that MOFAT had determined that the issue is outside the scope of the SOFA Joint Committee and therefore, MOFAT was unable to sign the AR. MOFAT Deputy DG Chang Ho-jin responded that MOFAT did not have jurisdiction on matters pertaining to projects affecting water levels, so it was unable to make a

legal obligation on the part of the ROKG. Therefore, MOFAT requested that the levee construction guarantee be removed from the AR, Chang said. The ROKG did intend to provide the appropriate levee level and tidal gate width, Chang maintained, but from MOFAT's standpoint, it was unclear which ministry had the responsibility. Chang promised to examine the matter further and find a resolution in the near term. Jeon commented making progress quickly required identifying the responsible party on the ROK side.

CAMP RETURNS

132. (S) During a prolonged and heated discussion on the best way forward for the planned return of 9 USFK camps in 2008, both the U.S. and ROK sides stuck closely to their well-defined positions. Noting that last year's return of camps and the ensuing public acrimony over environmental standards had damaged the Alliance, DASD Sedney said he hoped this year's camp returns would be settled quickly and smoothly in the spirit of an improved Alliance, suggesting that the returns could be accomplished as early as Secretary Gates trip to Seoul in June. Jeon expressed his hope as well, but repeatedly emphasized that MND would not assume a leadership role in moving the camp returns process forward this year. Jeon explained that the process was a delicate one, involving not just USFK and MND, but also public opinion, NGOs, the National Assembly, and relevant ROK ministries, particularly MOFAT and the Ministry of Environment (MOE). He stressed that MND had been significantly criticized and held accountable for its role in pushing through camp returns last year over objections of the rest of the ROK bureaucracy. In particular, Jeon took great care to explain that MOE, MOFAT, the National Assembly, and the public believed that MND accepted the camps last year by circumventing domestic laws and regulations and without following the proper procedures and without USFK fully complying with governing environmental standards as spelled out in domestic ROK law. Jeon asserted that MND had spent USD 200 million to remediate the returned camps to meet ROK domestic standards. Because of the situation, this year MND would only play a facilitating role among MOFAT, MOE, and USFK. DASD Sedney responded that MND had to do more than facilitate given its role as custodian of the Alliance.

133. (S) DASD Sedney reiterated the U.S. position that the SOFA procedures agreed to by our two governments was a treaty and had the force of law governing camp returns. Therefore, the U.S. had in fact complied with the relevant legal authority in last year's returns. This year, the U.S. also intended to comply fully with the environmental standards in the SOFA. Jeon said he understood the U.S. position and the legal argument, but that it did not correspond with how the vast majority of the ROKG viewed the issue. Jeon suggested that the two sides cooperate to resolve "regulatory complexities" in the SOFA in a slow and steady fashion, remarking that a hasty return would provoke negative publicity for the Alliance. The proper procedures must be followed, he said, and the first step was allowing MOE to complete the environmental surveys, arguing that more time was needed to complete the survey at Camp Hialeah in Busan. DASD Sedney responded by saying that MOE had already been granted an extension to complete the surveys, but that it had not completed any work. It appeared that MOE was trying to stall the process, he added, and that this is exactly what must be avoided.

134. (S) DASD Sedney said that the U.S. intended to follow the SOFA procedures, but stressed that the U.S. had no intention of changing the SOFA, which had been negotiated and ratified by both sides. DASD Sedney pointed out that the U.S. had SOFA agreements with multiple countries, and violating or going beyond the SOFA was simply not an option. He pointed out that the ROK had domestic laws that in some areas, go beyond the standards of the SOFA. He emphasized that in cases where there were differences, the SOFA would be the standard used by DOD because it was the legal authority

governing the stationing of U.S. Forces in Korea.

¶35. (S) MND Director General for International Policy Song Bong-heon suggested that both sides follow up on a suggestion to convene a SOFA Special Joint Committee, noting that it was not too late to resolve the camp returns issue more quietly and more quickly than last time. DASD Sedney noted that this was similar to the U.S. proposal in a January 30 letter from LtGen Wood to MOFAT DG Cho Byung-jae, requesting a two-star level meeting to discuss the planned camp returns for 2008. A ROK ministry that recognizes the primacy of the SOFA, such as MND or perhaps MOFAT, should be in charge, DASD Sedney said. MOFAT Deputy Director General for North American Affairs Chang Ho-jin confirmed that the ROKG intended to "stick by" the SOFA regulations as well, and agreed that both sides would convene a two-star level meeting to include MOFAT, MND, MOE, USFK, and the Embassy in early May. DASD Sedney and DM Jeon agreed that the SOFA Special Joint Committee would meet to discuss the way forward and report back the results.

EIGHTH U.S. ARMY (EUSA) TRANSFORMATION

¶36. (S) DASD Sedney said that the U.S. formally notified the ROKG April 1 that Operational Command Post-Korea (OCP-K) would stand up in Korea on June 16, 2008 as part of the U.S. Army's Transformation plans worldwide. EUSA Transformation Plans Chief COL Jimmie Mister explained that the establishment of OCP-K would result in enhanced capabilities, strategic responsiveness, and support function for the EUSA in defense of the ROK. The OCP-K would have fully independent intelligence, command and control, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities with the latest battle command and tracking systems.

¶37. (S) DASD Sedney stressed that the timeline moving the U.S. three-star general officer position off-Peninsula was unspecified and undetermined. Jeon agreed that the establishment of OCP-K does not translate to a weakening of the Alliance, noting the public could be convinced of this. DASD Sedney said as discussed on April 1, the U.S. wanted to make a public announcement after consulting with the ROKG. DASD Sedney and Jeon agreed that a coordinated press release statement and responses to Frequently Asked Questions on OCP-K's establishment in May would be most appropriate, with USFK and OSD coordinating the first draft of the release.

COORDINATED PRESS RELEASE

¶38. (SBU) The U.S. and ROK sides agreed to coordinate on a short MND press release. Text follows:

On Tuesday, April 8th 2008 in Seoul, the Republic of Korea and the United States held the 17th Security Policy Initiative with ROK Ministry of National Defense Deputy Minister for Policy Jeon Jei-guk and U.S. Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia Security Affairs as head delegates.

In SPI-17, the ROK and U.S. assessed and evaluated the major current issues in the Alliance including wartime operational control transition, Armistice Maintenance Responsibility, USFK realignment, FMS Status Upgrade, and etc., and the two sides expressed satisfaction for the smooth progress in these areas.

The ROK and U.S. agreed to build upon today's meeting to further cooperate mutually toward a stronger alliance, and to hold the 18th SPI meeting in June in Washington, DC.

End Text.

139. (SBU) Both sides agreed to coordinate at the working level to determine an exact date for SPI 18, tentatively slated for the week of June 11 in Washington.

140. (U) DASD Sedney and USFK J-5 have cleared this message.

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